

Bitterroot National Forest
Forest Supervisor, Dave Bull
1801 North First Street
Hamilton, MT 59840

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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June 13, 2008

Mr. Bull,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns regarding the Lost Horse Canyon and the attempt to re-open the quarry. As a concerned citizen, and avid recreator in the area, I oppose the plan as it is currently proposed. At the last meeting that was held, you were listening to citizens concerns and seemed to understand that some common ground must be found for things to move forward in a positive manner.

It is obvious that much has been discussed behind closed doors concerning the future use of the quarry. Citizens concerns about the environment, wildlife, endangered species, legal process, recreation, safety, tax expenditures, accountability, and transparency among other items were largely ignored during the earlier proposals brought forward by Ravalli County and the Forest Service. I mention these things not to point my finger, but to raise your awareness of the public's perception of the way the future of this public resource and recreational sight are being handled. People are rapidly losing faith in both the County and Forest Service. Several home owners and Bitterroot Climbers Coalition members have made verbal commitments to not only donate large sums of money, but are now willing to take legal action if the Forest Service does not pursue a course of action that will include all of the public's valid concerns. This is not a threat; this is today's reality. I feel that even though legal action may very well result in the permanent loss of resource extraction capabilities at this sight, which would thrill those most opposed to uses of this quarry, it would be a tragic loss of cooperative efforts that should yield the greatest potential solution(s) to the future shared use of this canyon. The following two items are what I perceive to be the major obstacles that must be addressed to satisfy those worried about the future of Lost Horse Canyon and quarry.

Open ended resource extraction

It will be rather easy to demonstrate to a court of law how easily private quarry owner's have been able to locate, extract, refine and sell the very types and quality of rock that has been proposed to be extracted in the Lost Horse Quarry on private land in the Bitterroot within the last year. One of the Forest Service's largest complaints is the improbability of finding and using a less controversial sight with such high quality rock is simply baseless. The newest quarry operating in the Bitterroot area is located up the Skalkaho drainage. Next door to this private operation is a nearly limitless supply of rock with all the required specifications of the Lost Horse Quarry proposals, all on Forest Service land. There has been little to no controversy surrounding this sight. Access is

significantly better and road conditions are better than those in Lost Horse Canyon. The Forest Service has failed to demonstrate any efforts being made to identify future areas for resource extraction. The public has repeatedly asked for this information; only to be ignored by FS officials.

Continued degradation of the Lost Horse watershed.

The current recreational plan for Lost Horse that the FS is working on should address this concern. Moving existing unimproved camp sights out of the Lost Horse Canyon floodplains only increases the current need for improved campgrounds and sights east of the bridge. Potential camp sights that are out of the floodplain west of the bridge are limited. The potential for improved recreational sights is obviously greatest to the east of this bridge. These factors are in direct conflict with any efforts to enlarge or use the existing Lost Horse Quarry on a regular basis.

The list of concerns from the public is large, but if these two simple items are not addressed, the F.S. will meet stern opposition on all future proposals. Working together and achieving a compromise with all concerned parties can avoid this.

I believe a majority of those involved understand that there are obvious current and future needs for rock extraction by the F.S. at Lost Horse Quarry. Using the rock for any where other than the Lost Horse and Como Drainages raises concerns with everyone. Allowing other public or private entities to use this quarry for resource extraction opens up Pandora's Box. Once other entities are involved with this sight or rock use is being considered outside the local areas just mentioned, large-scale resource extraction is back on the table.

Since our last meeting some concerned individuals are realizing the importance and benefits of allowing County, State as well as nonprofit groups to have shared use contracts with the Forest Service. Here are several points, which I believe are important to implement in order to reach a compromise.

- All current recreational uses on F.S. land near the quarry, need to be recognized as such and must be included in the Forest Services' use plan that is currently being drawn up.

- Large-scale resource extraction at this sight must be taken off the table permanently. Limited extraction would mitigate concerns to noise, safety, wildlife and recreational impacts.

- Limited extraction periods. Three to four extraction periods of no longer than a week with less than 600 cubic yards of material per extraction seems to be an acceptable level for most individuals involved with the recent proposals.

- Prior notification to all recreational user groups and homeowners in the area is a

must. A minimum of 30 to 60 days advance notice seems to be a reasonable amount of time for most concerned citizens.

- Access to recreational sights must remain open during quarry use.

- Blasting or drilling of any kind at this sight cannot be allowed. The safety, noise, and other impacts to adjacent recreational sights would be in direct conflict with the Forest Service's current use plan being drawn up for this canyon and the current national recreational plan of the Forest Service requiring the identification and protection recreational sights.

- Undercutting the unstable slope inside the current quarry cannot continue. Access to many developed climbs would be jeopardized and the potential for future rock slides or rock fall would only increase the likelihood of these things making there way out of the existing quarry and into the publics corridor to wilderness being the Lost Horse Road proper.

- Shared use contracts at this sight should continue for a limited period while an alternative sight is identified and opened for these future uses or larger projects, five years should be sufficient.

If the above concerns are recognized by the Forest Service, I'm sure that all involved parties are not only willing but are eager to work with the Forest Service in the future. The Bitterroot Climbers Coalition, Access Fund, and Lost Horse Coalition are willing to help the Forest Service acquire R.A.C. funds that could be used to improve the watershed issues existing just below and adjacent to the quarry. The B.C.C. and Access Fund could fund trail improvement projects, trail maintenance projects, and volunteer clean up days at the all-adjacent recreational sights.

Finally, please help us all find a common cooperative compromise that will greatly benefit, the environment and all recreational users at Lost Horse Canyon. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Pinjuv